

AKD 0701
2/12/10
16cUpdate #7, sulfolane investigation
Early, Marti (DEC)
to:

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Dear concerned citizen,

DEC has received a number of questions recently about the status of sulfolane in groundwater near the Flint Hills refinery. We now know much more about the sulfolane plume than we did in November of last year. Please read the information below, and also take a look at the attached map to learn more.

The North Pole city water is free of sulfolane. The city's treatment system removes the traces of sulfolane which show up in tests of raw water, so the water going to consumers does not have any sulfolane in it. The city water is tested weekly.

We want to remind you of the public meeting on sulfolane issues at the North Pole High School on Thursday, February 18th, at 7:00 p.m. We hope to see you there.

About the sulfolane plume:

- **We've found the edges of the plume.** Monitoring wells installed at Badger Road and Peridot Street and west from that intersection are clear of sulfolane. These wells are in shallow groundwater, where most of the private drinking water wells are located. Please see the attached map of the horizontal extent of sulfolane contamination in the groundwater. Our website also has this map. We'll learn more soon about plume's depth.
- **Residential wells within the area marked on the map should be tested.** The area Flint Hills is testing now is north of Richardson Highway. Contact Jeff Cook at 488-5104 if your well has not already been sampled.
- **If your water well results showed above 25 parts per billion sulfolane, we advise you not drink the water.** Flint Hills is providing bottled water to all residents with impacted wells and working toward a permanent alternate water supply. The federal health

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agency, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, recently recommended 25 parts per billion as the most protective level for drinking water. See reports at <http://www.dec.state.ak.us/spar/csp/sites/npole-background.htm#rev>

- **We have no evidence that the contamination is spreading further or moving.** The plume is driven by a source -- soil saturated with fuel from old spills at the refinery. The fuel contains sulfolane. Removing this fuel is time-consuming, but it is the most effective way to stop the sulfolane contamination. Ongoing efforts to remove this fuel from the ground are slowly reducing sulfolane in the groundwater. Work has been done on the refinery to ensure there is not an ongoing release of sulfolane, and the refinery is installing more safeguards to ensure no new future releases.
- **We do not expect concentrations to increase significantly in the plume area.** Permanent monitoring wells have been installed to measure sulfolane monthly. This monitoring program will tell us if there is any increase or sign of the contaminant moving further. If it does move, we'll let people know.
- **There is no sign that the soil in the residential areas is impacted by sulfolane—**only the groundwater. We are evaluating the potential for any other sources of sulfolane contamination besides the refinery, but at this time we are certain the main source is at the refinery. We are also certain that the contaminant is moving off the refinery property in the groundwater, not the soil.

Again, our website address with a summary of the investigation is at www.dec.alaska.gov/spar/csp/sites/npolerefinery.htm

If you still have questions, please call us. Call Ann Farris, at 907-451-2104, or me at 465-5206.

Sincerely,

Marti Early

Community Involvement Specialist

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